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THE PHANTOM TOWN.

Sir—The following story is founded on a legend well known on the Kerry shore of the Shannon; I imagine it originated in something like the Fata Morgana of the Bay of Naples, or some such appearances as those noticed in a former Number of your Journal, as having been observed along the Causeway Coast.

W. F. G.

On a bright summer's morning, as I stood on one of the tremendous cliffs which overhang the broad Shannon at its mouth—where the unceasing war of the Atlantic's gigantic waves had fretted and foamed for ages, among the caves and hollows of this iron-bound coast—gradually a shade was thrown on the bosom of the placid glass-like river. As I gazed on the smooth waters the shadows increased, and imperceptibly began to take palpable form. My wonder increased on perceiving, slowly developed, the shadowy forms of towers, steeples, and turreted castles, which spread themselves on every side. There was to be seen, clearly defined, a noble town. On a sudden I heard a noise, as of rushing waters, accompanied with what I took to be wailings and lamentations. Looking towards the sea, I saw the white-crested waves rushing with impetuosity towards the shadowy town. On they came, and in a moment all had vanished, except one solitary castle, at its farthest extremity. From this (as I gazed with increased astonishment) issued the form of a warrior, armed, and mounted on a jet black horse; on his crupper was seated a female form, who clung closely to the warrior with one hand—the other she alternately waved towards where the town was, and the shore where I stood. They buffeted with the waves for a few moments, and then sunk amidst the boiling surges. As I turned, with melancholy feelings, from viewing these strange appearances, I heard a voice calling me, in a commanding tone, to remain. I stood transfixed. A venerable old man, in the garb of a monk, was advancing from the face of the cliffs towards me.

"Stay, oh, man!" said he, "and hear from me the melancholy story of the strange sights to which you have been an unbidden spectator. I, alone, (destined for my punishment to remain on earth 'till time shall be no more,') can explain these wonders. Centuries have passed," he continued, "since these now deserted shores were enlivened by the neighbourhood of a large and populous town, such as you have just now seen reflected on the waters. Buried many fathoms beneath these waves lie the palaces and castles of princes and barons of this land. How so great a calamity happened you shall hear.

"The castle of king Ulic was illuminated for a general banquet and rejoicing. His queen had given birth to a daughter, heiress to his throne and possessions. The numerous retainers of the king occupied each side of the immense board, which reached from end to end of the great hall. At the head, on a throne elevated above the rest, sat the king himself. The night was nearly spent, and many of the revellers retired, when a stranger was observed standing just within the threshold, intently gazing on the king. All eyes were quickly turned on the intruder, who, seeing he was observed, walked deliberately up the hall. When he approached the king, he drew from under his ample robe a scroll of parchment, placed it before him and retired, as if to observe its effect. The king took up the parchment, and read as follows:—

"Oh, king! when thy daughter a stranger shall wed,
Whose hand with the blood of her father is red,
Where thy castles now stand, the broad Shannon shall cover,
And thy court-yard the grave of the maid and her lover."

"Seize that evil-boding stranger," cried the king, greatly excited by what he had read. An hundred armed men started to their feet, but the stranger was no where to be found; how he had entered, or how departed, no man could tell. All present, deeply moved at the incident, deserted the banquet and retired to rest.

"Adjoining Ulic's territories, were those of Mac Murchard, the powerful chieftain of Leinster. These princes had united in amity in order to repel the English

invader. Mac Murchard had a son, then six years old, to whom Ulic determined to betroth his infant daughter; he sent a trusty messenger to negotiate this treaty, and the marriage contract was ratified with the full consent of all parties. Mac Murchard, in order that his son should possess that learning of the schools which his ancestors despised, sent him to his brother's convent in France, where he was to remain until able to bear arms. Sixteen years had passed—the young Mac Murchard had long since returned, and became a successful wooer in person to the beautiful Eva. The day was fixed for the ceremony, and all was preparation for the festivity. Some days previous to the marriage Mac Murchard's brother, the monk, unexpectedly arrived from France. 'He came,' he said, 'to look once more on his native land before he died.'

"At length the bridal morn arrived, most inauspiciously gloomy and tempestuous; the young Mac Murchard led his timid bride to the altar—they pledged their mutual vows, and the ceremony was finished. At this moment a voice was heard, saying, 'Ulic! Ulic! thy destiny is nearly accomplished.' All eyes immediately turned towards that part of the chapel from which the voice came, and Ulic's followers instantly recognised the figure of the stranger monk, who had so mysteriously entered with the prophetic scroll.

"Ulic," said he, as he advanced, "look on me and recognise the enemy of thy youth, Alan Mac Murchard. Hast thou forgotten the day when you disgraced my manhood with a vile blow? thinkest thou, that because my father, treating me as a hot-brained boy, interfered, to prevent my staining my hands with thy coward blood, that I have forgotten that degrading stain? You were my senior in years and strength—you struck me; I swore an oath that I would not die until I had amply revenged the dishonour—that hour is now arrived. Far towards the black north I travelled; to a mighty sorceress, to procure that prophetic scroll; I it was who placed it on thy board; by my means thy daughter is wedded to a stranger, and thy ruin certain. Know, proud king, that my brother's son, the young Mac Murchard, lived but a few hours after his arrival at the convent; I, knowing of the marriage contract with your daughter, reared up an orphan peasant as the heir of Mac Murchard, and a base born Frenchman's son is the bridegroom you have chosen."

"Then, perish, minion," said Ulic, drawing his sword, "and, with thy death, leave that accursed spell still unaccomplished;" he made a lunge at the bridegroom, but the monk, seeing his intention, threw himself between them, received the wound in his side, and fell.

"The young Mac Murchard, (as we shall still call him) then obliged to defend himself from the furious king, being hard pressed, made a desperate pass at Ulic, who fell mortally wounded.

"Fly," cried the monk, with a faint voice; "hear you not the roar of the raging waters—take up your fainting bride, and fly while there is yet hope."

"All fled from the chapel on hearing this awful announcement of the dying monk. The young Mac Murchard, bearing the inanimate form of the lady, hastened towards the stables, and led forth his trusty black war horse. The lady, now restored to animation, he placed behind him, and prepared to ride from the threatened danger; but it was too late. The lamentations and drowning cries of the inhabitants, borne on the winds, announced that some dreadful occurrence had taken place; as he advanced to the gate the rush of the mighty ocean was heard—in a moment the gates were closed by the violence of the waves. Mac Murchard, still hoping to escape, clung to his horse, supporting his bride, but a gigantic billow was seen rolling along, with resistless impetuosity—they rode on its summit for a moment, and were overwhelmed to rise no more. All that inhabited that peninsula were totally swallowed up by the rapacious element. Once in a hundred years the Phantom Town is seen in its wonted situation, and the events of that tremendous day are acted over again; and I, the guilty monk, Mac Murchard, an unwilling spectator of my evil work."

He ceased. I looked once more at the waters, now

ruffled by the western breeze, and turned again to address the spectre monk: he was gone. I departed, and never since visited the neighbourhood of the *Phantom Town*.

W.F.G.

FOUR SONNETS.

MORNING.

Fresh from the chambers of the eastern skies
Morning walks forth in gold—the shadows troop
Gradual away—the mountain summits rise,
Struggling thro' ambient darkness; now a group
Of things confused and indistinct appears,
Dim as to memory's eye the scenes of bygone years.
'Tis yet not quite clear morn—the shades of night,
Still darkling on the western welkin, stray;
But now another radiant glow of light
Spreads far its lustre, quick they melt away,
While, burnished with the orient's roseate hue,
Earth and her fairest scenes stand full reveal'd to view.

NOON.

Now, flaming up the heaven, the sun has made
His mid-day journey; beneath his burning rays
Earth torrid lies: delightful now the shade
That spreads its coolness where a fountain plays
In silvery meanders—there, there to lie,
Nor feel the sultry influence of the summer sky;
Serenely meditative right the soul
Traverse throughout the farthest realms of thought,
Gaze raptur'd on the landscape, and unroll
Nature's page, with heavenly wisdom fraught.
How fair and lovely the elysian scene,
While all things smile beneath the sun's meridian beam.

EVENING.

Cool, zephyry, ethereal, and serene,
Mild evening walks along the western sky,
A thousand shadows follow in her train;
How slow and stealthily they move, the eye
Scarce sees them stealing onward; like a sea,
Whose waves still roll unseen yet gain upon the lea,
Ever and anon another shadow sends,
Along the earth, its deep and dusky fold.
A balmy, soft, and freshening dew descends;
Reviving Nature, curtained round with gold:
Just on the verge of heav'n, with tranquil motion,
The broad-orbed sun sinks wearied in the ocean.

NIGHT.

'Tis night—the mourning vest of Nature—dark
And gloomy is the starless sky; around
A melancholy stillness reigns; but, hark!
'Tis but the hooting of the owl. A sound
Again breaks on the silence!—'tis a shrill
Cry from some lone churchyard—now all again is still.
Where now the grandeur of creation? Where
The crowds that mingled in the busy strife?
All's now a dismal chaos, lone and drear,
Rayless and black; and thus is it with life—
Awhile the scene is beautiful and bright,
Then comes one deep, and dark, and ever-during night.

W. R.

MOVING BOG.

This bog is generally known by the name of *Slogan*, or rather *Sluggan* bog, and lies on the right of the mail coach road from Randalstown to Ballymena. It is one of the largest in the County of Antrim, measuring upwards of fifteen hundred acres. On Saturday night, September 19th, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood were alarmed by repeated loud reports, in some measure resembling thunder, and which they soon discovered to proceed from the bog. Shortly after the immense mass began to move, and, taking a N.W. direction, spread over about fifty perches of the mail coach road, on which it now lies, from ten to fifteen feet deep. Passing the road, on an inclined plane, it moved on to the river Main, into which it flowed. The water and mud soon formed a channel of about twelve feet deep, in the centre of the part that was moving; and is, at this date, (October 5th), still running, having nearly dammed up the river Main,

which, at the place, is of considerable breadth and depth. A good deal of damage has been done, but not so much as has been spoken of in the daily papers; upwards of thirty acres of arable land are completely covered, one house is nearly so, and a considerable quantity of corn and hay has been lost; the tops of corn stacks and hay ricks are scarcely visible; fortunately, no lives were lost. It is reported that the birds and hares fled from it, as fast as possible, on hearing the first noise. This bog underwent a similar convulsion, but on an infinitely smaller scale, in November, 1810. This extraordinary occurrence is evidently to be attributed to water, lodged beneath the peat; which, it should be observed, in this district, lies on a stratum of blue clay, impervious to water, so that when any large quantity of water accumulates below, it must, of necessity, force up the bog, as it evidently has done in the present instance, the bog being now, through a vast extent, full of great rents filled with water.

Ballymena, Oct. 5, 1855.

G—Y.

THE PLEASURES OF HOPE.

Life is subject to a variety of sorrows and disappointments; even the wealthiest, who with "velvet pace go o'er its primrose path," are not exempted from a share in the many ills that "flesh is heir to"—none, from the highest rank to the lowest, from the king to the peasant, are totally free from the intrusions of care. Sorrow, in some shape or other, is the common lot of mortality. To counteract this natural heritage of man, there are many feelings of the mind which, when existing to a high degree, tend, if not completely to neutralize, at least greatly to alleviate its acerbity. To bear with mild, but not, at the same time, passive resignation, whatever annoyances we meet with in our journey through life—to push forward with ardour, fearless of whatever apparent obstacles may lie in our way—are necessary to all who would aim at success; to repine and give way before disappointment is not only unmanly, but foolish, when we reflect that none are free from the same difficulties that we ourselves experience. Of all feelings, however, which give to the mind a tone of energy and perseverance, none seem to be so efficacious as hope. Hope, while we are in the darkness of care and sorrow, darts its warm sunbeam upon our minds, and chases away our inward gloom—

Hope, like the glimmering taper's light,
Adorns and cheers the way,
And as darker grows the night,
Emits a brighter ray.

Hope cheers and enlivens us amid the pressure of the greatest dangers and distresses—it is hope which chiefly supports men in the study of the sciences, and, indeed, in all pursuits where the result is not quite clear and certain. It is well known what opposition, even from his own followers, Columbus met with in his circuit over the yet unexplored ocean; but, cheered and supported by hope, he still persevered, till his object was attained, and America rose upon him from the bosom of the deep. When Coron was asked, after he had divided all his property among his followers, what he reserved for himself, he replied—Hope. Hope, however, when indulged to excess, may be injurious, as it may prevent us from making the proper exertions ourselves. Johnson, in a beautiful allegory, represents hope seated upon a throne, which was approached by two gates, one guarded by reason, the other by fancy. Reason admitted none without a close examination; fancy admitted them indiscriminately. Those, says he, who went in through reason's gate, soon reached the throne of hope; while those who went in through fancy's, either as they advanced found some impenetrable barrier between them, or turned at once into the valley of idleness. Thus showing that hope, as well as other passions, may exist in the extreme; and thus that it either causes men to pursue objects which a little reflection would tell them could never be realised, or that it makes them remain in total inactivity, revelling in an ideal dream of happiness which is flitting before their imagination.

But hope, when indulged in moderately, gives a feeling